

SEGNALAZIONI
ECOLOGICHE E
FAUNISTICHE

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NOTES ON SOME UNCOMMON SPECIES OF MOLLUSCS
FROM THE MALTESE ISLANDS **

Summary

Through the efforts of a group of enthusiasts, much light has been shed on the occurrence of some of the more uncommon mollusca round our shores. The following notes try to bring the situation up-to-date, as many of the species mentioned have never before been recorded for the Maltese Islands.

Riassunto

Grazie al contributo di un gruppo di appassionati è stata approfondita la conoscenza di molte specie non comuni esistenti nelle acque dell'arcipelago di Malta. La maggior parte delle specie citate non era mai stata segnalata per le isole maltesi e ciò porta ad aumentare il numero delle circa 400 specie di molluschi segnalate in passato come sicuramente presenti nell'arcipelago maltese.

Through the efforts of past malacologists, to date around 400 species of molluscs have been recorded for the Maltese archipelago. The recent efforts of a group of enthusiasts have helped to further this knowledge. Many new records of species for our shores have been added, and some species retained in the past to be rare for our shores, have been discovered in plenty in determined localities. A list of the more interesting species with accompanying notes, follows hereunder.

* 1, Alley 1, St. Catherine Str.; Qormi (Malta).

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— *Gibbula nivosa* (A. ADAMS, 1851): It is perhaps useless to add more about this species. Suffice it to be said here that the hypothesis forwarded by Mr. S. PALAZZI (1978) has been confirmed by several of my friends. However at S. Mary's Bay, Comino I. live examples were taken, in small numbers, under stones on a sandy bottom, 2-3 m depth, which is a different habitat to that where this species is usually found in at St. Thomas Bay. Also found live at Delimara, in good numbers, but smaller specimens, only about 5-6 mm.

— *Alvania carinata* (DA COSTA, 1778): A single fresh dead specimen (4.75 mm) was found in shell detritus at Salina B. in Sept. '76.

— *Tornus seguenzianus* (TRYON, 1888): An imperfect (1.75 mm) specimen from Salina in Aug. '79 in 4 m depth.

— *Melanoides tuberculata* (MÜLL., 1774): This normally fresh-water gastropod with a very wide geographical range (Fam. Thiaridae, Superfam. Cerithiacea), was found to be abundant in the backwaters of Salina B. First noted in 1976, alive in a few centimetres of water on a hard substrate with fine vegetation, and also on a salt and dead weed admixture at sea littoral. Reaches 30 mm. Probably introduced accidentally in Malta, so far known only from this bay, where it is quite abundant.

— *Cerithiopsis metaxae* (DELLE CHIAJE, 1828): 2 dead specimens (9 mm long), found at Salina in 4 m in 1977°.

— *Opalia hellenica* (FORBES, 1844): Already cited for Malta by Mamo in the last century, it still remains a great rarity. A couple of dead fresh specimens (4.5 mm) found at Salina in 4 m in Sept. '77.

— *Epitonium pulchellum* (BIV., 1832): Also noted by Mamo. 2 dead specimens, one fresh, found at shoreline at St. Thomas Bay, by V. Mizzi. Size: 16 mm[∞].

— *Janthina spp.*: In the winter of '78-'79, T. Sammut and myself found numerous live specimens of *Janthina pallida* (HARVEY in THOMPSON, 1841), and a few dead specimens of *J. bicolor* (MENKE 1828) at Mellieha Bay. One specimen (11 mm in diameter) was doubtfully identified as *J. globosa* (SWAIN.). It differed quite considerably from the other two species, and quite resembled other specimens of *J. globosa* from New Zealand waters in the author's collection.

— *Chrysallida spp.*: This family was badly treated by past local malacologists. The following species, all dead taken yet fresh, were collected at Salina B. and at Bahar ic-Caghak. Most are new records for Malta: *excavata* (PHIL., 1836), *doliolum* (PHIL., 1844), *nanodea* (MONT., 1878), *emaciata* (BRUS., 1866), *intermixta* (MONT., 1844), and *terebellum* (PHIL., 1844).

— *Menestho vitreum* (BRUS.): Specimens of this species (up to 7 mm long) are rather common at Salina Bay in shallows. Also large

° Several others from Dragonera in 30 m.

∞ 1 fresh dead example from Salina B.

specimens of *Kleinella humboldti* (Risso, 1826) are taken in the same bay (up to 10 mm).

— *Crepidula fornicata* (L., 1758): 4 live specimens (max. 34 mm long), were taken in 10 mt at Marsamxett Harbour in 1975 by A. Wright, attached to rocks in the company of *Ostrea edulis* (L.). Probably introduced here by foreign vessels. Another fresh dead specimen was found at Marsaxlokk B. on beach in 1973.

— *Trivia monacha* (DA COSTA, 1778): 2 dead specimens on beach at Wied il-Ghajj, taken by V. Mizzi in 1977.

— *Natica maroccana* (CHEM., 1781): 4 fresh dead specimens, one still with traces of the animal, on beach at Mellieha Bay in winter of '78. Max. size: 12 mm. At first thought to be forms of *N. dillwyni* (PAYR.), no doubt was left after seeing figure in SABELLI & SPADA (1980).

— *Neverita josephina* (Risso, 1826): This otherwise abundant species seems to be rare on our shores. One fresh dead, albino specimen was taken only in some 10 mt at Marsaxlokk in 1979.

— *Cymatium parthenopaeum* (V. SALIS, 1793): Odd dead specimens taken in various localities. One fine live specimen (96 mm) was taken in 20 m on a sandy mud bottom off St. Julian's Bay in 1975 by fishermen.

— *Latiaxis babelis* (REQ., 1848): One live specimen (33 mm) taken off St. Julian's in 12 m in Dec. '72. Dead at Mellieha and Armier Bay. One live *Latiaxis amaliae* (KOBELT, 1907) was fished off Filfla I. to the south of Malta in some 120 m in Dec. '79.

— *Turris similis* (BIV., 1838): Few specimens live taken at Filfla I. in some 120 m. Max. size: 65 mm.

— *Cythara* *cfr.* *sicula* (RV., 1846): Few fresh dead specimens (to 11 mm) taken at Salina B. and St. Thomas B.

— *Bela nana* (SCAC., 1836): 2 dead specimens collected by D. Attard at St. Thomas B. (Size: 6 mm).

— *Lobiger serradifalci* (CALC., 1840): Few beach, fresh dead specimens found at Marsaxlokk in 1977.

— *Solemya togata* (POLI, 1795): Rarely taken, fresh dead in shallows at Salina B. and Marsaxlokk. To 30 mm.

— *Pinna pernula* (CHEM., 1785): Live specimens found in depth of 10-15 m at Grand Harbour, Qammieh and off St. Thomas B., usually attached to rocks by byssus. Max. size: 26 cm.

— *Chlamys solidulus* (RV., 1853): Rather moderately common live in about 80 mt off St. Thomas B. on hard ground.

— *Venericardia corbis* (PHIL., 1836): A couple of fresh dead specimens from beach at Bahar ic-Caghak in 1979. Several dead others from Dragonara in 30 m.

— *Layonkairea layonkairei* (PAYR., 1826): Moderately common on muddy sand bottom at Salina B. in shallows. To 23 mm.

— *Atactodea striata* (GM., 1790): In Aug. '77, T. Caruana of Zejtun showed me a specimen, still with soft parts inside, which was found in the Marsaxlokk B. area. Thought at first to be some variety of *Mesodesma cornea* (POLI), it was found to correspond almost exactly

with the figure given by BARASH & DANIN (1977), the size being 17.5 mm long, 14 mm high.

— *Clavagella aperta* (Sow., 1820): Few live specimens were taken in around 5-10 m depth at the Grand Harb. and Marsamxett Har. Size of valves: 27 mm. Others from Salina B.

— *Teredo utriculus* (GM., 1790) and *Bankia minima* (BLAIN., 1828): Both species found live in washed up timber at Bugibba and Qawra Pt. The former species less commonly met with.

— *Spirula spirula* (L., 1758): A single specimen, in good condition was collected on the beach at St. Thomas B. by D. Attard in March '79. Max. diam. 17 mm.

— *Lepidopleurus cajetanus* (POLI, 1791): Found in fair numbers under stones at Salina and Bahar ic-Caghak in 4-5 mt, both on soft and hard bottoms. Max. size: 21 mm.

The above notes give some idea of the variety of shell life that can be encountered round the Maltese shores. With further exploration new records and information are expected to come to light regarding our shell fauna. In the meantime may I thank the following who have been most helpful by their donations of specimens and by providing useful notes on identification or otherwise: Dr. FC Naggs of the Moll. Sec. (British Mus.) for identification of *Melanooides tuberculata* (MULL.), and my friends D. Attard, T. Azzopardi, T. Sammut, V. Scerri, V. Mizzi, and A. Wright, and fisherman N. Grech of St. Julian's.

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